

14. MALE BREEDING PLUMAGE OF THE BAYA WEAVER  
*PLOCEUS PHILIPPINUS TRAVANCOREENSIS* WHISTLER

The HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN Vol 10, p 93 (1974) by Sálím Ali and Dillon Ripley, mentions that the male breeding plumage of *Ploceus philippinus travancoreensis* is largely suppressed as in the eastern race *burmanicus* and further investigation is necessary.

During my visit to the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, U.K., I examined the 5 specimens of *travancoreensis* in their collection. The type specimen is a male collected by Sálím Ali on February 19, 1933 from Kottayam, Kerala. The bird was moulting into breeding plumage. The forehead and part of the crown has deep bright yellow feathers and the hind crown, nape and neck still have black feathers. From this observation I presumed that *travancoreensis* males would have bright yellow breeding plumage like the nominate race *philippinus*. I contacted a seasoned birdwatcher Mr. C. Sashikumar from Kerala in July 2000 for a report on the male breeding plumage of *travancoreensis*. He was unsuccessful in obtaining the information due to failed breeding

season of the birds in 2000, but he observed 30 nests of *travancoreensis* on coconut trees at Pattanur, Kannur district, Kerala on August 5, 2001. All the males had bright yellow crown, nape and breast, and yellow and brown streaks on the back. The male breeding plumage in *P.p. travancoreensis* is as bright as in *P.p. philippinus* and not suppressed at all.

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November 9, 2001 SARASWATHYUNNITHAN  
*Bombay Natural History Society*  
*Hornbill House, S.B. Singh Road,*  
*Mumbai 400 023, Maharashtra, India.*

15. SIGHTING OF ORTOLAN BUNTING *EMBERIZA HORTULANA* LINN.  
IN NARAYAN SAROVAR SANCTUARY, KACHCHH, GUJARAT

We saw an Ortolan bunting *Emberiza hortulana* Linn. near Mudia village, and between Sanandro and Khadak villages during a winter avifaunal survey (Nov-Dec 1998) in Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary, Kachchh district. In all, we had five sightings, of which on four occasions only one bird was seen, while on one occasion four birds (1 male and three females) were seen.

The Ortolan bunting is among the most colourful buntings in India, and can be identified easily by the presence of three yellow moustachial stripes on the throat. Of these, one broad stripe runs down the throat, starting from the base of

the lower mandible. The other two, one on either side, run backwards from the base of the lower mandible, below the eye, towards the wings. All these stripes terminate within the ashy grey patch which extends from below the throat to the point where the belly starts, and also behind the neck. These stripes are pale yellow in the female bird and bright yellow in the male. The ring around the eye is creamy yellow and the bill bright orange. Only the Ortolan and grey-necked buntings (*Emberiza buchanani*) have the eye ring. The latter has been reported as common and abundant during winter in Kachchh

(Ali 1945, Khacher 1996).

Two solitary birds were seen in a grassy patch next to fallow land in undulating areas, feeding on grass seeds along with the tawny pipit (*Anthus campestris*) and house sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). The other three sightings were in grassy patches on stony hill slopes under *Acacia senegal* forest with *Euphorbia nuvulia*, *Salvadora oleoides* or *S. persica* association. Each time the bird was disturbed, it immediately flew for cover, most often into *Euphorbia* or *Salvadora*.

In India, the Ortolan bunting has been recorded as a vagrant on spring migration, twice in Gilgit, once each in Kashmir and Delhi (Ali and Ripley 1983). It was recorded only once in the Little Rann of Kutch Sanctuary in Kachchh

district (Dharmakumarsinhji 1977) and in Hingolghad in Rajkot district, Gujarat (Khacher 1996).

Extralimitally, it breeds in the western Palaearctic from the Altai and Iran, west to Scandinavia and Spain. It winters from Mediterranean to Senegal and Somalia, Arabia and Iran (Ali and Ripley 1974). This is an additional record for India and only the second one, after more than 20 years, from Kachchh.

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JUSTUS JOSHUA

S.F. WESLEY SUNDERRAJ

V. GOKULA

Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology,  
Patwadi Naka, Bhuj (Kachchh),  
Gujarat 370 001, India.

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## 16. OCCURRENCE OF *CNEMASPIS KANDIANA* (KELAART), FAMILY GEKKONIDAE, IN AMBOLI, MAHARASHTRA.

On August 8, 2000, while searching for amphibians at about 2230 hrs near an abandoned house in Amboli (15° 55' E, 73° 55' N), Maharashtra, we saw a gecko moving on the wall. Another specimen of the same species was seen in our hotel room the same night. The latter specimen was collected and brought to the BNHS and was identified as *Cnemaspis kandiana* (BNHS Regn. No. 1446). Only two specimens of this species were recorded during this survey. We visited the area again between October 10-12, 2000. During this visit, we sighted a large number of *C. kandiana* in the forest and inside

houses. In the forest, they were mostly found on trees, under rocks and among the leaf litter. They frequent houses and were mostly seen on walls. During the day, they were seen basking or chasing each other, and during the night, they were mostly seen feeding on insects attracted towards a light source. *C. kandiana* was the most commonly seen gecko at Amboli among the 29 specimens recorded in two hours in the morning, in the Nature Park, an area of c. 1 km patch of forest developed by the Forest Department.

According to Smith (1935), the range of this species is Sri Lanka and the hills of southern